

America's Great Outdoors
Notes from Youth Listening Session

Location: Albuquerque, New Mexico

Date: July 17, 2010

President Obama launched a national conversation about conservation in America at the White House Conference on the Great Outdoors on April 16, 2010. The President understands that protecting and restoring the lands and waters that we love and reconnecting people to the outdoors must happen at the local level. Therefore, President Obama directed the principal leaders of the Initiative to travel across the country to listen and learn from people directly involved in finding grassroots solutions to conserve our lands, waterways, historical and cultural resources and to reconnect Americans with the Outdoors. The President indicated that the sessions should engage the full range of interested groups, including tribal leaders, farmers and ranchers, sportsmen, community park groups, foresters, youth groups, businesspeople, educators, State and local government, recreation and conservation groups and others. The President placed a special priority on engaging with America's youth. Below are notes from the breakout groups at the Listening Session sorted by Discussion Question. Please feel free to use the ideation tool at <http://ideas.usda.gov/ago/ideas.nsf/> if you would like to share your thoughts.

Discussion Questions

Y1. Where do you go when you are not indoors?

Y2. What do you do personally to protect the environment?

Y3. What are some obstacles and challenges that prevent young people from spending time outdoors?

Y4. What recommendations would you make to President Obama to get more young people engaged in, and connected to, the outdoors?

Comments	Question (1-4)
Biking and Swimming. Likes to go down by the River. Alameda has a nice river.	Y1
Likes to play soccer	Y1
He has a Five acre field that he goes to work on	Y1
Works in a community garden. He lives by the Sandias so just being near mountains and water is what he likes to do.	Y1
She and her friends go off roading in Tijeras, hiking in the Sandias and swimming	Y1

After football practice he likes to ride his bike to the pool. He lives next to an arroyo so he likes to walk up and down the arroyo	Y1
Likes to go backpacking and camping in New Mexico, Colorado and Utah with family and friends.	Y1
Birdwatching, hiking and mushroom hunting	Y1
Fishing, Camping, in Eagle Nest and whitewater rafting	Y1
Skiing and snowshoeing in the Sangre de Cristo Mtns. A lot of biking and camping and backpacking close to Santa Fe	Y1
Farms on five acres, goes running in the foothills in the near his pueblo. Likes to go outdoors and watch the sunrise	Y1
Likes to rollerskate around the community and the Rio Grande. She likes to hang out with friends at the skate parks in the city.	Y1
Works with the Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program. They monitor the Bosque which is a riparian ecosystem along the Rio Grande. They monitor water depths and litter fall for that forest. They get the youth involved and now have 700 youth that come into the Bosque to do water samples. By getting the youth involved it forms a lasting relationship with the environment and gets the kids interested in something that they normally wouldn't do.	Y2
He also works with the youth and right now they are working at Santa Fe High building an outside classroom. Kids need hands-on-experience and ask how they can get involved. It is not only an outdoor classroom. It contains a perma-culture garden and solar panels. They will be monitoring the solar panels throughout the school year. He feels that more monies for outdoor education programs in public schools are needed so the students connect with the land instead of a textbook. It would be nice if the National Parks should have outdoor classrooms so that when the students do visit the Parks serve as an example	Y2

He is currently working in the Carson National Forest building a fire break between the Pueblo and the forest to help reduce the spread of a fire. They are also building trails in public lands. When people see them out on the trails they know that they are taking care of the land and they have greater appreciation for the land. They are trying to make it more accessible for the public. They have two different crews of about 20 doing forestry work. They also have two more crews working with the youth in the community trying to get the youth to do things outside. Over the course of the year they have over 100 people working for the Youth Corp	
	Y2
One of the things that she has done locally is start a climate action group in her school. One of the things that you have to take into account is to set the example first and make your voice heard. Being a community leader shows other people what they are capable of by taking the initiative.	
	Y2
Art connects with nature. Picking up recycled materials and trash and making art with it.	
	Y2
Work out of the Ancestral Lands Office in Acoma Pueblo. Being Native American they have a certain connection to the land and they teach that to their groups. They uproot tamarisk removal, introduce native plants along the riverside. Their main focus this summer is erosion control and water conservation	
	Y2
They employ a lot of the Acoma youth. Kids find that it is fun being employed with them. They take it back to the Native American culture. Being stewards of the earth and that it goes back to the mother earth. They find pride and joy doing that kind of work.	
	Y2

One of the biggest issues in the Gila Wilderness where he works is the fact that the trails, the corridor and the access to trails is deplorable. The budget for fires is huge and trail budgets are small. The signage on trails does not exist. He spends countless hours flagging out trails to find some sign of a trail. He sometimes literally searches on the ground looking for any sign of tread.	Y3
Access speaking from the urban setting like the Alb. metro area, urban youth have challenges and barriers even getting into nature. He thinks more organizations can be supported. He thinks connecting it with education through curriculum is important. Supporting conservation efforts through student employment. Working on Organic Community gardens. Catchment and conservation. Getting youth to tend a garden is good. Pollution is huge and that can be combined with education too and how can you protect the land for future generations	Y3
Biggest issue is gangs and graffiti on the west side where he lives. Kids are afraid to go out.	Y3
Access to recycling bins is a another big issue because a lot of people would like to recycle but don't know how to take it	Y3
South valley has no access to outdoors because of the litter and gangs. She is involved in sports and some of the sports groups have started to clean up to make it a better community. More community centers are needed, the youth want to be out but have no place to go play. No sidewalks. School is helping out by making a green house on campus and a compost pile to make a garden in school	Y3
Is a member of several clubs and they try to get other students involved and try to do different events but hard to get students involved because it requires money	Y3
Rio Grande Schools gets the most rap in the state and because of this the school gets small profits.	Y3

Trash. It is dumped on the roads. It is not only cans. It is old cars, sofa's etc. If there was a way to get rid of trash they would get outdoors more often.	Y3
Trash makes you fall behind. You need to try to get rid of it.	Y3
Biggest problem is money because they employ 30 students and pay them minimum wage. Money comes out of their school budget	Y3
She feels what we are dealing with in the big picture is a lack of perceived value of being outside. It is no longer considered a priority to get kids outside. Media can help curb that and we need role models. Perceived risk is huge problem. Making outdoors safe for everyone is really important	Y3
Not so much physical access as much as mental access. As long as you are not part of the environment you cannot connect with it. Just working with Earthworks has educated her and has been her chain of thought on a daily basis.	Y3
Accessibility is big problem. Some kind of transportation would encourage people to get outdoors more.	Y3
Indoor distraction is an influence	Y3
Not doing a good job of marketing the outdoors. Many wonderful programs available but do not put monies aside this year for next year. There are non-profits that they can go to.	Y3
NM is now his home. Has been working with the youth of NM and one of. Meaning of nature and holding it true and invest in the regions. Live in different worlds but how do you get them together. Whole week and bring youth together	Y4

<p>Lack of older mentors, supporting role models, education, more service learning based curriculum. It is all connected with taking care of the earth. It should be done through after school programs. Funding stream and supporting the budgets that are crippled. Sustainability of funding for programs that are educational in nature.</p>	Y4
<p>One of the biggest problems is that the motivation and encouragement for youth to be outdoors is not there especially with a society where there is more emphasis on image. Need to start encouraging in schools because they are students and spend 90% of their time in school and the community should get the image out there. They should get more emphasis from the community and schools. She would recommend to the Secretary of Education that there should be more community gardens and outdoor classrooms in schools. Making sure how important it is and making it part of the curriculum. Kids do not see the importance. Having student mentors is another aspect.</p>	Y4
<p>Support the outdoor environment and support farmers and ranchers who also support the environment. It preserves the open space. Support and maintain the multiple use of land</p>	Y4
<p>Possibility to do an outreach to parents. If you start kids out young it becomes part of their culture. He would suggest side activities that you can do that would not take money and have community conversations.</p>	Y4
<p>Unplug from the indoors, Ipods, computers etc. and do something outdoors.</p>	Y4
<p>He would like to see all federal buildings at zero carbon. Set the example in the National Parks so youth could see solar panels, green buildings etc. Another recommendation would be to have a Green Conservation Corp so that the youth could have hands on experience constructing green buildings and at the same time get paid for it.</p>	Y4

She thinks youth scholarships in the conservation and outdoor environment would encourage more students.	Y4
Recommendation would be going to the community and getting young kids involved. He is currently working with water harvesting and reconstructing sites.	Y4
Scholarships and Money. Try to focus on the youth. The younger kids look up to someone who works outside. Use that as an incentive. If they see someone outdoors they will want to work alongside of them.	Y4
Recommendation would be to set up a city town hall and get the community involved to plant trees. Another recommendation is to have a march for conservation.	Y4
She has a problem with drunks when she takes her boy scout troops out and has had to pack them up and leave.	DQ2
She feels the biggest challenge is bringing people to the outdoors. Teachers are isolated in their classrooms so they are not connected to the outdoors either. They have parents that don't care.	DQ2
He has done a lot of programs with the federal and state agencies and people are very generous with their time but it is very hard to sustain that as a teacher. He feels that there needs to be a youth involvement plan. Things are not going to happen without a plan, It's a hit and miss. Since the federal leads now want to do something, how about a plan.	DQ2

<p>He brought a group of students from Gallup to the Youth Session and he works with youth conservation corps, planting trees, making trails and restoring tributaries. What they need the most is an agreement from the Federal Government to create and sustain conservation jobs. Whatever happened to the agriculture workforce? Why isn't there more agriculture education in schools instead of welding? There is too much screen time in the schools and homes.</p>	DQ2
<p>More marketing. No one is marketing these sort of jobs. They don't promote to these groups the opportunities that are out there so they have failed in that. They need to cross the threshold on how they can set monies aside if there are grants in their own federal organizations and how you can commit to these groups.</p>	DQ2
<p>There are lots of opportunities to be outdoors. The outdoors is free. Make more opportunities for free outdoor activities. Because of all the fees that exist it makes it difficult for families that can't afford it.</p>	DQ2
<p>She is convinced that one of the reasons for the crime is the nature gap in children. They have no fundamental underline joy for the earth that they live on. They do not have enough community centers for children. If you are going to convince the kids to go outdoors you need to make the experience pleasant.</p>	DQ2

<p>A challenge is communication. Many agencies overlook pueblos and tribal government. Anything that deals with water and lands, they want to know about it. They worry about what is happening upstream. Conservation thought is already developed. There is a tremendous need for development and technology. He remembers farming with horses. What works for them in the pueblo community is to allow them to have the steering and guidance in projects. They have the conservation but there is the problem of dollars. Under the Federal Government is agreements. Tools and resources are themselves to make the earth better.</p>	DQ2
<p>Great Animals and he would like Secretary Salazar put more protection of them.</p>	DQ2
<p>She is involved with trying to preserve a wetland. They need to work more with federal and state laws and jurisdictions. There needs to be more coordination with agencies on preservation efforts.</p>	DQ2
<p>Cultural Resources. These resources are part of the landscape and anything that affects the land affects those resources. They are fragile and non-removable. There is a lack of appropriate scales where the state and federal government is involved. There is no plan and so one of things that need to be in place is conservation plans at the regional level. He was involved in putting together the Sonorian Dessert Conservation plan and should be considered as a model.</p>	DQ2

<p>His group is trying to get together with the youth conservation groups and bring grants into the Las Cruces Communities and get kids out into the dessert in Dona Ana County. It helps to reconnect the rest of the community. The Federal Government should pass the Omnibus Bill. The Land Bill will be helpful for the West. BLM should look for more wilderness or NCA lands. He would like to see Otero Mesa become a national monument. NLSC is now helping him put together a friends group to get grants. He would like to see the Federal Government provide more funds to organizations that support what the group does.</p>	<p>DQ1/DQ 3</p>
<p>One of the biggest challenges they face is that there is not enough funding for trails to fix those in existence or to create new trails. Just over the 4th of July weekend 14 members from his group cleared 80 miles of backcountry trails in the Pecos Wilderness. The Forest Service is under continuous pressure and without these kinds of groups they have no choice but to close the trails.</p>	<p>DQ1/DQ 3</p>
<p>Start with a clearly defined vision that goes out over 5 years to serve as motivation to see the big picture.</p>	<p>Y4</p>
<p>His group formed a non-profit to accept monies. The BLM was designated as a lead and he doesn't feel that they would have been funded if the BLM staff wasn't involved. One of the things they do is hire youth to do watershed restoration. You have to work with your neighbors and designate an agency to get the staffing.</p>	<p>Y4</p>

<p>Likes to do outreach in Otero Mesa. He is trying to get people to Otero Mesa. BLM is coming out with an RMP. Local based environmental group. Need more youth and more organizations to become involved and work with what is in the backyard. So much misinformation out there and it cannot be what is being taught to the kids. Everyone can work together to come up with a plan. Teach adults and kids agricultural lessons. Environmental issues need to be taught in schools. It starts with the older generation that the earth matters.</p>	Y4
<p>She formed her own coalition. There are 6 members who are very committed to the community and the land. They have a relationship with Cochiti and Santo Domingo. They are not waiting for anyone and are doing what they want. She wants the Federal Government to have a vision for the 21st century that increases public lands and have an agreement with private land owners. Northern NM wants the toxic chemicals ceased and from getting into the waterways. She would also like to see a continental conservation protection plan.</p>	
<p>Students to grab concepts at the level that they are studying. Partnerships with agencies works.</p>	
<p>Political issue and how do we support the political environment. Federal Government role is to work locally to create these coalitions. He feels that what is needed is a partnership at the state level.</p>	
<p>BLM was told no more wilderness policy. That is the worst given about public lands to greedy corporations. Use it as the great outdoors and not as a market for greedy corporations.</p>	
<p>Who is going to pay for this? Federal Government should go back to the state and they should start getting money from the states. They have the money from oil and gas, gambling, military etc. Organizations should legislate through the state.</p>	DQ3

Collaborative effort help to keep them moving. Teach them young and recruit locally. If you plant the seeds in youth there is ownership. Give the youth jobs and training so they can go to college and get educated in the environment and have the opportunities. Federal Government is not marketing these tools.	Y4
Kids get attached if given money. Have a CCC for youth. There are a lot of young people that need jobs. This will give them the responsibility.	Y4
Open senior centers for gardens so that they can have organic foods to eat. It might become intergenerational where some of the grandchildren could help and it would start teaching them young.	Y4
The federal government role would be to amend Bill 2747 so that tribes are eligible. He would also like to see the 1872 mining law reformed.	Y4